

had thrown into the run was attacked and severely wounded. The goats themselves once jumped over the partition wall into the adjoining deer-run. While the authorities were in dread of the diminutive creatures being crushed to death by the stampeding sambar and spotted deer, what actually happened was that the goats had put the inmates to rout and sent them galloping to the farthest end of the paddock, after which they wandered about in supreme nonchalance until roped and led back to their own cage.

They have not suffered from any serious illness during the three and odd years of their life at the Zoo. Periodical examination of the faeces has revealed them to be free of internal parasites. Also, no external parasites have been noticed so far. But they are subject to attacks of severe cold during the hot months.

'BELL-VIEW,'

DEWAN'S ROAD,
ERNAKULAM, KERALA,
May 20, 1963.

N. G. PILLAI

5. RESCUE AND RINGING OF FLAMINGOS IN KENYA COLONY

In October 1962 a local daily newspaper published a report about flamingos dying by the thousand on Lake Magadi in Kenya Colony. Enquiries made by Mr. Humayun Abdulali have elicited the following information from Mr. Leslie Brown, President, East African Natural History Society, which we are glad to publish. There were colonies of both species of flamingos, Lesser Flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*) about 1,000,000 pairs and Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) about 10,000 pairs. Between 800,000 and 900,000 young hatched. Shortly after hatching many young birds were affected by the saturated solution of soda in which they were moving forming heavy balls of soda round their legs. There was a generous response to appeals for helpers and funds, and active rescue efforts were put in train at a very early stage. Teams of catchers caught the affected young and knocked off the soda anklets. It is estimated that about 30,000 lives were saved by this method. In addition, about 100,000 more young were saved by driving them into water in which the solution of soda was not so concentrated and where the anklets did not form. The final saving was the ability of the young to move to the southern end of the lake, and the early arrival of the rains in

October which diluted the solution of soda in the water of the lake.

Late in November Mr. Brown estimated the number of young at about 400,000, which would give a breeding success of rather less than 50%. Further mortality occurred later among the last-hatched young owing to the parents having to fly long distances to get food (to Lake Natron and back, a good sixty miles a day). Even so, making allowances for the unusual conditions, the proportion of breeding success would not compare very unfavourably with that in a normal year in the usual breeding ground in the centre of Lake Natron.

The tragedy has a redeeming feature in so far as the big organisation set up for rescuing the young made it possible to ring the flamingos on a large scale. As was mentioned in 'Notes and News' in our last issue, 8000 young Lesser Flamingo were ringed. It is hoped that some definite information about the migratory movements of the two species of flamingo will now be obtained.

BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,

91, WALKESHWAR ROAD,

BOMBAY 6-WB,

June 17, 1963.

EDITORS

6. ON THE ALLEGED INFERIORITY OF THE SOUTHERN GRACKLE [*GRACULA RELIGIOSA INDICA* (CUVIER)] AS A TALKING BIRD

A conversation I had recently with Mr. K. I. Mathew, State Wild Life Officer of Kerala, suggests an explanation for the widespread belief that Pahari Mynas from north India (*Gracula religiosa intermedia* and *G. r. peninsularis*) are better talkers and learn more readily than south Indian birds (*G. r. indica*), a belief that bird dealers take advantage of by asking for ridiculously high prices. The majority of the birds that come from Gorakhpur, U.P., and from eastern and northern central India are taken as nestlings; they are therefore reared in captivity and become conditioned to human handling and the sophisticated noises of human society. As against this, I learn from Mr. Mathew that in Kerala these birds are caught with bird lime when they collect in large flocks to feed on the nectar of the freely flowering forest shrub *Helicteres isora*; that is to say, their training does not begin till they are adult. To my suggestion that the few